

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS (HANDLE AS NODIS)

FROM USDEL CAIRO NO. 0037

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, XF, US
SUBJECT: CAIRO CONFERENCE RECESSES: NEXT PHASE OPENS
JANUARY 15 WITH POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITTEES IN
JERUSALEM AND CAIRO, RESPECTIVELY

1. SUMMARY: CAIRO CONFERENCE RECESSED MONDAY, DECEMBER
26, WITH UNDERSTANDING THAT ITS WORK WOULD CONTINUE IN
MINISTERIAL-LEVEL POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITTEES
AGREED TO IN BEGIN-SADAT TALKS IN ISMAILIYA AND THAT
CONFERENCE WOULD RECONVENE IN CAIRO AT TIME TO BE AGREED
UPON IN LIGHT OF PROGRESS MADE IN THOSE TWO COMMITTEES.
DEFINITIVE JUDGMENTS ABOUT HOW SADAT AND BEGIN ASSESS
RESULTS OF ISMAILIYA TALKS MUST AWAIT REPORTS EILTS
AND LEWIS WILL GET FROM THEM TUESDAY MORNING. INITIAL
READOUTS FROM EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI DELEGATIONS HERE,
HOWEVER, REFLECT DECIDEDLY MIXED REACTIONS. ISRAELIS
ARE ON THE WHOLE MORE UPBEAT, BLAME NEGATIVE INFLUENCE

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OF EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS FOR FAILURE TO
REACH AGREEMENT ON PALESTINIAN LANGUAGE IN PROPOSED
DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, AND PROFESS PUZZLEMENT THAT
EGYPTIANS HAVE NOT APPRECIATED HOW FAR-REACHING BEGIN'S
POSITION IS -- PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ACCEPTANCE
OF INTERNATIONAL BORDER BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL.
EGYPTIAN DELEGATION ACKNOWLEDGES THAT GOOD PROGRESS WAS

MADE ON EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI ISSUES AND IS ASSUMING THAT SINAI AGREEMENT CAN BE HAMMERED OUT IN WEIZMAN/GAMASY TALKS. THEY ARE PESSIMISTIC, HOWEVER, ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR

AGREEMENT ON PALESTINIAN FORMULA IN POLITICAL COMMITTEE AND STRESS THAT USG MUST WORK ACTIVELY TO MODIFY ISRAELI POSITION IN THIS RESPECT BETWEEN NOW AND CONVENING OF COMMITTEE NEGOTIATIONS JANUARY 15 AS WELL AS DURING THOSE NEGOTIATIONS ONCE THEY START. EGYPTIANS HERE SEE POLITICAL COMMITTEE NEGOTIATIONS IN JERUSALEM AS DEALING BOTH WITH QUESTIONS OF COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT, PARTICULARLY PALESTINIAN FORMULA, AND WITH DRAFTING EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TREATY ON "NATURE OF PEACE." ISRAELIS FOR THEIR PART ARE UNCLEAR ABOUT HOW PROGRESS CAN BE MADE ON PALESTINIAN FORMULA AND SEE PRINCIPAL TASK OF POLITICAL COMMITTEE AS DEALING WITH LARGELY BILATERAL ISSUES. WITH RESPECT TO U.S. ROLE, ISRAELIS HAVE SAID THAT U.S. OBSERVERS (AS WELL AS UN OBSERVER) WOULD BE WELCOME AT JERUSALEM POLITICAL COMMITTEE NEGOTIATIONS, WHERE EGYPTIANS HERE HAVE MADE MUCH MORE OF A POINT OF EMPHASIZING IMPORTANCE THEY ATTACH TO HAVING U.S. (AS WELL AS UN) OBSERVER PARTICIPATE. THEY HAVE SAID THEY UNDERSTAND THAT SECRETARY VANCE COULD NOT BE PRESENT FOR CONTINUING NEGOTIATIONS BUT HAVE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT HE COULD BE THERE FOR OPENING

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SESSION AT LEAST. BOTH SIDES CLEARLY ENVISAGE BOTH COMMITTEES AS SERIOUS AND ON-GOING AFFAIRS WITH TIMEFRAME OF FOUR TO SIX WEEKS, AFTER WHICH CAIRO CONFERENCE WOULD RECONVENE AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL. NEITHER SIDE SEEMS TO EXPECT, NOR EVEN TO WANT, EARLY PARTICIPATION OF ANY OTHER PARTIES. OUR IMPRESSION AT THIS POINT IS THAT BOTH SIDES ARE INEXORABLY MOVING TOWARD NEGOTIATION OF BILATERAL AGREEMENT, WITH EGYPTIAN DELEGATION TO CAIRO CONFERENCE FIGHTING HARD TO HOLD THE LINE FOR ISRAELI CONCESSIONS ON PRINCIPLE OF PALESTINIAN "SELF-DETERMINATION" (NOT REPEAT NOT PALESTINIAN STATE) AS THE MINIMUM NECESSARY TO PROTECT EGYPTIAN FLANKS AGAINST ARAB CRITICS AS THIS PROCESS GOES FORWARD. AT SAME TIME, BOTH SIDES CONTINUE TO STRESS THAT OBJECTIVE REMAINS A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. WE DO NOT HAVE IMPRESSION EITHER SIDE FEELS THE TIME HAS COME WHEN DECISION HAS TO BE MADE BETWEEN THE BILATERAL AND COMPREHENSIVE ROUTE. BOTH REFLECT THE VIEW, WITH PREDICTABLE NUANCES OF EMPHASIS, THAT CONTINUATION OF EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS WILL ULTIMATELY LEAD TO BROADENING OF NEGOTIATION PROCESS, THOUGH BOTH ARE VAGUE ABOUT EXACTLY HOW THIS WILL COME ABOUT. WE ARE STRUCK WITH ABSENCE OF ANY

MENTION BY EITHER EGYPTIANS OR ISRAELIS OF SYRIAN AND SOVIET ROLE. PRINCIPAL AREA OF UNCERTAINTY, BY PROCESS OF ELIMINATION, IS WHERE AND WHEN JORDAN AND PALESTINIANS (AND EGYPTIANS STUDIOUSLY AVOID ANY REFERENCE TO PLO) WILL FIT INTO THE PICTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. IMMEDIATELY AFTER RETURN OF DELEGATIONS FROM ISMAILIYA WE WERE NOTIFIED THAT CONFERENCE WOULD BE

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CONVENED AT 1700. WE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO SEE ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN DELEGATION HEADS FOR FEW MOMENTS BEFORE MEETING WHICH PRODUCED SOME BRIEF OVERALL COMMENTS ABOUT ISMAILIYA MEETING, REPORTED BELOW.

3. AT CONFERENCE SESSION, ABDEL MEGUID INVITED BEN-ELISSAR TO REPORT TO US AND UN COLLEAGUES RESULTS OF SADAT-BEGIN TALKS. BEN-ELISSAR SAID TALKS HAD BEEN CONDUCTED IN CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE. DECISION HAD BEEN REACHED THAT CAIRO CONFERENCE WILL CONTINUE ITS WORK BY MEANS OF TWO COMMITTEES, ONE POLITICAL THE OTHER MILITARY. POLITICAL COMMITTEE WOULD MEET IN JERUSALEM, MILITARY COMMITTEE IN CAIRO. BOTH WOULD BE CONVENED AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL. CHAIRMANSHIP OF THESE COMMITTEES WOULD ALTERNATE BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND EGYPTIANS. DATE FOR CONVENING HAD NOT BEEN FORMALLY FIXED BUT THINKING WAS THIS WOULD OCCUR AROUND MID-JANUARY (IN PRIVATE MEETINGS BEFOREHAND BOTH ELISSAR AND MEGUID MENTIONED SPECIFIC DATE OF JANUARY 15, ELISSAR STATING THAT

EARLIER DATE WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR DAYAN IN VIEW OF HIS VISIT TO ITALY PLANNED FOR ABOUT JANUARY 12).

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4. CONTINUING REPORT ELISSAR SAID THAT AS INDICATED BY TWO LEADERS IN THEIR PRESS CONFERENCE, THERE HAD BEEN AGREEMENT ON SOME POINTS; ON OTHERS THEY HAD AGREED TO DISAGREE. LATTER HAD BEEN LEFT TO POLITICAL COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS. FINALLY, REPORTED ELISSAR, SADAT AND BEGIN AGREED TO MEET AGAIN WHENEVER THIS MIGHT BE NEEDED.

5. ABDEL MEGUID WISHED ONLY TO ADD THAT ISRAELIS AND EGYPTIANS HAD BOTH AGREED TO INVITE THE U.S. AND UN TO SEND "OBSERVERS" TO ATTEND POLITICAL COMMITTEE. MILITARY COMMITTEE WOULD BE BILATERAL TO BEGIN WITH, BUT OBSERVERS MIGHT BE INVITED AT LATER STAGE. IT WAS AGREED CAIRO CONFERENCE WOULD REMAIN "FRAMEWORK" FOR PEACE PROCESS. MEGUID SAID HE WAS THEREFORE PROPOSING THAT CONFERENCE RECESS, WITH NEXT MEETING TO BE FIXED AFTER CONSULTATION AMONG THE CONFEREES. HE WOULD STATE THIS TO THE PRESS, EMPHASIZING THIS WAS RECESS, NOT CLOSING OF CONFERENCE.

6. ATHERTON SAID HE APPRECIATED ELISSAR AND MEGUID REPORTS, WHICH WE WOULD CONVEY TO SECRETARY VANCE. HE WAS SURE THAT THE SECRETARY WOULD BE PLEASED TO HEAR THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE TO BE ACTIVELY PURSUED IN TWO NEW COMMITTEES AND THAT WE WISH THESE ON-GOING EFFORTS ALL SUCCESS. HE SAID WE STAND READY TO BE OF ASSISTANCE IN ANY WAY TO THOSE ON-GOING MEETINGS.

7. EARLIER, IN THEIR PRIVATE MEETINGS WITH US, ELISSAR AND MEGUID GAVE US BRIEF ACCOUNTS OF MEETING AT ISMAILIYA THAT FUNDAMENTALLY JIBED, BUT WITH ONE OR TWO INTERESTING DISCREPANCIES. BOTH AGREED THAT PROGRESS WAS MADE ON EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI ASPECT, BUT THAT PALESTINIAN ASPECT HAD BEEN MUCH MORE DIFFICULT, WITH END RESULT

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BEING A STAND-OFF. ELISSAR SAID TWO LEADERS WERE CLOSE TO AGREEMENT LAST NIGHT ON PALESTINIAN PORTION OF JOINT DECLARATION, BUT SOME OF SADAT'S ADVISORS HAD "PULLED HIM BACK" AND THIS MORNING JOINT DECLARATION FELL APART. HE SPECIFICALLY NAMED ABDEL MEGUID, BUTROS GHALI, AND AL-BAZ AS THE CULPRITS, AND ADDED "DEFINITELY

NOT" GAMASY OR MUBARAK OR SALEM. OVERALL, HOWEVER, ELISSAR EXPRESSED HIMSELF AS HOPEFUL ABOUT THE RESULTS. TALKS ON BILATERAL RELATIONS HAD GONE VERY WELL, AND IT WAS APPARENT THAT ATMOSPHERE OF SADAT-BEGIN TALKS, EVEN WHEN THEY HAD BEEN DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PALESTINIAN ISSUE, HAD BEEN GOOD. ELISSAR THOUGHT MERE FACT TWO COMMITTEES HAD BEEN SET UP AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL WAS STRONG POSITIVE SIGN.

8. MEGUID (WITH AL-BAZ PRESENT) DEFINED DRAFT DECLARATION ISRAELIS HAD BROUGHT WITH THEM AS "VERY BAD." HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE WAS NO SERIOUS PROBLEM WITH USING RESOLUTION 242 LANGUAGE ON WITHDRAWAL, BUT SAID ISRAELI FORMULATION ON "SELF-RULE" FOR PALESTINIAN ARABS WAS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE. MEGUID SAID EGYPTIANS HAD NOT REPEAT NOT INSISTED ON SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO PALESTINIAN STATE, BUT HAD COUNTERED WITH FORMULATION USING TERM "SELF-DETERMINATION" FOR PALESTINIANS. WHEN ISRAELIS WOULD NOT ACCEPT THIS, THEY WENT SO FAR AS TO PROPOSE "LEGITIMATE NATIONAL RIGHTS" BUT "EVEN THIS" WAS REJECTED BY ISRAELIS. (AL-BAZ COMMENTED THAT ISRAELIS HAD SAID THIS WAS NOTHING MORE THAN LANGUAGE U.S.-SOVIET STATEMENT BUT AHERTON REMINDED HIM WORD "NATIONAL" DOES NOT APPEAR IN U.S.-SOVIET FORMULA-

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TION.) MEGUID ACKNOWLEDGED THAT TALKS ON EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI
ASPECT HAD MADE GOOD PROGRESS. ISRAELIS HAD AGREED TO
ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL BORDER AND NOT QUESTION EGYPTIAN

SOVEREIGNTY. THEY HAD AT SAME TIME INDICATED DESIRE TO RETAIN USE OF "AIR BASES" NEAR RAFAH AND EILAT, AND HAD PROPOSED UN FORCE AT SHARM AL-SHEIKH WHICH COULD ONLY BE WITHDRAWN WITH ISRAELI, EGYPTIAN AND SECURITY COUNCIL APPROVAL. THEY HAD ALSO INSISTED ON SETTLEMENTS REMAINING IN RAFAH AREA. MEGUID SAID EGYPT COULD ACCEPT SECURITY COUNCIL VETO OVER REMOVAL OF UN FORCE, BUT NOT ISRAELI VETO. MORE GENERALLY, MEGUID AND AL-BAZ THOUGHT AIRBASES AND DESIRE TO RETAIN ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS WERE "FOR BARGAINING PURPOSES" AND THAT ISSUES ON ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN FRONT WERE BASICALLY RESOLVABLE IN GAMASY TALKS WITH WEIZMAN, OF WHOM MEGUID SPOKE HIGHLY.

9. MEGUID SAID MILITARY COMMITTEE WOULD IN EFFECT DEAL WITH EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI BILATERAL PROBLEMS. POLITICAL COMMITTEE WOULD TAKE UP COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT, ESPECIALLY TWO ISSUES: PALESTINIAN QUESTION AND NATURE OF PEACE. ABDEL MEGUID MADE IT CLEAR LATTER SUBJECT
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WOULD TAKE FORM OF DISCUSSION OF PROVISIONS OF DRAFT PEACE "TREATY." (ELISSAR TOLD US THAT SADAT HAD WITH ONE STROKE CUT THROUGH TREATY/AGREEMENT GORDIAN KNOT BY

READILY AGREEING WITH BEGIN TO USE WORD "TREATY.") MEGUID SAID TWO LEADERS EXPECTED TWO COMMITTEES TO COME UP WITH DRAFT TREATY WITHIN "ABOUT FOUR TO SIX WEEKS." CAIRO CONFERENCE COULD BE RECONVENED AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL AT ANY TIME EITHER SIDE WISHED TO HEAR PROGRESS REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES.

10. MEGUID SAID HE HOPED IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE U.S. TO ENGAGE IN CONTACTS WITH BOTH SIDES BETWEEN NOW AND JANUARY 15. THERE WAS OBVIOUS NEED TO PREPARE AS WELL AS POSSIBLE BEFOREHAND FOR WORK OF COMMITTEES, PARTICULARLY DISCUSSION OF PALESTINIAN QUESTION IN POLITICAL COMMITTEE. HE ALSO CONSIDERED IT IMPORTANT FOR U.S. TO PLAY "A MORE ACTIVE ROLE" IN THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS THAN IT HAS TO DATE. NOW WAS THE TIME, SAID MEGUID, FOR THE U.S. TO PUT PRESSURE ON ISRAEL TO REALLY PRODUCE SOMETHING ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE.

11. WE ASKED BOTH ISRAELIS AND EGYPTIANS WHETHER ISRAELIS HAD USED ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE TO INDICATE "SELF-RULE" REGIME FOR PALESTINIANS WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE PERMANENT AND MIGHT BE REVIEWED AFTER PERIOD OF TIME. WHILE ELISSAR CLAIMED DAYAN HAD PROPOSED THIS TO SADAT, MEGUID AND AL-BAZ STATED NOTHING OF THIS SORT HAD BEEN PUT

FORWARD BY THE ISRAELIS.

12. COMMENT: EGYPTIANS, ALTHOUGH NOT PESSIMISTIC,
ARE CLEARLY NOT AS UP-BEAT AS ISRAELIS ABOUT RESULTS
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OF SADAT-BEGIN MEETING. MEGUID SAID THERE HAD
BEEN IMMEDIATE NEGATIVE REACTION AMONG EGYPTIAN
PEOPLE. WE HAVE TO BEAR IN MIND, HOWEVER, THAT
PARTICULAR GROUP OF FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS WHO ARE
ASSEMBLED HERE REGARD THEIR ROLE IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES
AS APPLYING BRAKES TO PRESIDENT WHO AS THEY SEE IT
HAS DEVELOPED SO MUCH MOMENTUM THAT HE IS IN CONSTANT
DANGER OF GIVING UP EGYPTIAN POINTS WITHOUT ADEQUATE
ISRAELI RETURN. THEY ARE LIKELY TO COLOR THEIR
APPRAISAL OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF SADAT'S STEPS WITH THEIR
OWN CONCERN THAT HE IS MOVING TOO FAR TOO FAST.

13. EGYPTIANS IN CAIRO CONFERENCE DELEGATION ALSO
CLEARLY FEEL MOMENT HAS COME FOR U.S. TO WEIGH IN WITH
ISRAELIS ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE. THEY SEE INEVITABLE IMPASSE
ON THIS ISSUE IN POLITICAL COMMITTEE AND OBVIOUSLY FEEL
ISRAEL MUST COME UP WITH MORE THAN IT HAS TO DATE.
ISRAELIS FOR THEIR PART ARE TAKING POSITION THAT (A)
BEGIN AND SADAT COULD HAVE REACHED AGREEMENT ON
DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR NEGATIVE
INFLUENCE OF EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY REPRESENTATIVES
ON SADAT, AND (B) EGYPTIANS HAVE UNDERESTIMATED HOW
FAR BEGIN HAS COME ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION AND, IN
PARTICULAR, ON SINAI SETTLEMENT. (JERUSALEM POST
EDITOR ARI RATH PREDICTED THAT, UNDER INFLUENCE OF
POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITTEE NEGOTIATIONS AND
WITH PASSAGE OF TIME FOR THOSE NEGOTIATIONS TO HAVE
IMPACT ON ISRAELI OPINION, BEGIN WILL MOVE EVEN
FURTHER ON BOTH ISSUES.)

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14. TO EMPHASIZE THE OBVIOUS, FOREGOING ACCOUNTS OF ISMAILIYA TALKS OF COURSE REFLECT VESTED INTERESTS OF CAIRO CONFERENCE DELEGATES WHO HAVE BEEN FIGHTING HOLDING ACTION FOR PAST TWO WEEKS. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE OF EGYPTIAN DELEGATION, LESS SO OF ISRAELI REPRESENTATIVES AND OF BEN-ELISSAR IN PARTICULAR WHO SEEMS TO US MORE PLUGGED INTO ISRAELI LEADERSHIP THAN EGYPTIAN DELEGATION IS TO SADAT. WE WILL OBVIOUSLY BE ABLE TO MAKE MORE DEFINITIVE JUDGMENT OF HOW BOTH SIDES ASSESS ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS, AND PARTICULARLY HOW SERIOUSLY EGYPTIANS LOOK TO US TO WEIGH IN WITH ISRAELIS ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE, ONLY AFTER WE HAVE SADAT'S AND BEGIN'S REPORTS TO EILTS AND LEWIS TUESDAY MORNING. EILTS

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